

King Of The Middle March (平装)



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Grade 7 Up—A glorious and uplifting conclusion to the trilogy. As before, Arthur de Caldicot tells his story, which this time finds the teen on an island off the coast of Venice waiting for a Crusade to begin. He is full of both wonder at his surroundings and the multinational band of men and anxiety over what is expected of him. Arthur is knighted and takes his oath to defend God seriously, but he is conflicted to learn that the Saracens are educated and devout people not unlike the Europeans. At the forefront of his thoughts is Merlin's admonition to keep asking questions. When money and politics wreak havoc with the plans for the Crusade, Arthur becomes disillusioned, and he faces a crisis of faith when the Venetians bring the Crusaders into an internal conflict to siege the city of Zara. Concurrently, Sir Stephen, Arthur's lord, is wounded and must be taken home to England, and because of duty, Arthur takes him and leaves the Crusade. Parallel to Arthur's own quest is that of legendary King Arthur and the Grail knights, whom Arthur watches in his seeing stone. He watches as Camelot is thrown into chaos, and he learns that not all battle ends in glory and that treachery exists even there. In a return home at Easter that is full of symbolism, Arthur finds answers to lifelong questions. Whether readers are familiar with the two previous Arthur sagas or not, they will be gratified by the majestic resolution to the parallel stories of Sir Arthur's coming of age and King Arthur's demise.—Cheri Dobbs, Detroit

Country Day Middle School, Beverly Hills, MI

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In the final book of the Arthur Trilogy, young hero Arthur de Caldicot ventures to an island off the coast of Venice as the Fourth Crusade is about to begin. As the story of Arthur's coming-of-age and knighthood unfolds, Arthur's "seeing stone" reveals to him the world of the legendary King Arthur as disharmony spreads among the Knights of the Round Table. Weaving these two stories together takes the skill of a masterful author. Narrating the shifting settings and the diverse cast of characters, along with the pageantry, brutality, and reality of the crusading experience, is a tall order. Michael Maloney rises to the challenge. Whether it's the dignity of the dying King Arthur, the lilt of the serving maid, or the resounding sagacity of the wizard Merlin, Maloney gives voice to each. Listeners will find much to savor in this recording. A.R. Winner of AudioFile Earphones Award © AudioFile 2005, Portland, Maine-- Copyright © AudioFile, Portland, Maine --This text refers to the Audio Cassette edition.

Starred Review Gr. 6-9. This third volume in the trilogy that began with *The Seeing Stone* (2001) opens with Arthur, Lord Stephen, and thousands of other crusaders camped near Venice, awaiting the building of a fleet of ships and the arrival of money to pay for them. Eventually, their leaders agree to help Venice recapture the Christian city of Zara in exchange for the vessels that will take them to the Holy Land, and Arthur sees horrors that he is powerless to stop. All this is mirrored in the old story of King Arthur, which young Arthur watches unfold at intervals in his magical stone. Just as the promise of Camelot dissolves into treachery, chaos, and death, so the boy's world seems fatally flawed by greed, brutality, and human frailty. Arthur's response to his fellow crusaders' violence and the questions he raises about religion, morality, and war resonate not only in the two worlds of the novel but also in our own. The traditional Arthurian story comes to its inevitable end as Arthur the narrator returns home to England to take up his new life, fully cognizant of a world full of evil but also filled with promise. Carolyn Phelan

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The final volume in the acclaimed Arthur trilogy sees 16-year-old Arthur de Caldicot on his way to the fourth Crusade. The year is 1202. In Venice, a mighty army of knights and foot soldiers is being assembled as they await the completion of a fleet of ships. The twin powers of religion and politics are being played against each other in a bloodthirsty campaign against the Saracens, in faraway Jerusalem. Crusaders from many nations are gathering to spill the blood of the foreign infidels and liberate the Holy Land for the one true God. Plunged into this melee, the newly knighted Arthur discovers that his ideals of Christianity and nobility are brutally contradicted by the unruly violence he sees around him. Longing for his young betrothed wife in England and traumatised by the reality of war, he seeks refuge in his seeing stone, given to him by Merlin four years before. Watching the downfall of the Knights of the Round Table unravel, he comes to a gradual understanding of the wayward nature of men, a small comfort as he observes the murder, rape and pillage inflicted on innocent souls by the Army of Christ. Further anguished by the arrival of his loathsome father, who has constantly thwarted his efforts to find his real mother, Arthur is overwhelmed by confusion, trying hard to live up to his own high principles of chivalry in a world gone mad. As the story of King Arthur draws to its familiar, sad conclusion, the young knight must work out his own answers to the conflict he carries within him before he can find

peace. Its intense graphic realism bringing the mediaeval world to life, supported by a richly descriptive text and crammed with colourful historical detail, this is a magnificent conclusion to the bestselling series, which began with the award-winning The Seeing Stone. Kevin Crossley-Holland brings history to life with his own magic touch, making this an absorbing story which cannot fail to satisfy his wide readership. Ages 12+ (Kirkus UK) --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

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